



Caltrans Division of Research,  
Innovation and System Information

# Research



# Notes



Planning, Policy,  
and  
Programming

JULY 2021

Project Title:  
SB1 Public Opinion Polling

Task Number: 3521

Start Date: September 1, 2020

Completion Date: June 30, 2022

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## Investing in California's Transportation Future: Public Opinion on Critical Needs

To conduct an online survey asking a random sample of 3,500 California residents about how the state can improve transportation infrastructure and services.

### WHAT IS THE NEED?

Caltrans and other state entities guide the annual expenditure of billions of dollars for transportation services and infrastructure. As policymakers draft expenditure plans, one critical set of information they need is a clear understanding of how the public views the quality of the current transportation system, their goals for how to improve it, and specific types of expenditures that they would value. Currently, Caltrans has no ongoing research program that gathers this information. This survey will provide that information for 2021.

If desired, this research project can also provide a starting point for an annual survey that would allow Caltrans to identify how the public's views on transportation evolve over time.

### WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The researchers will design and administer an online survey that asks a random sample of 3,500 Californian adults about their opinions on transportation in the state. The survey will be designed to function as both a stand-alone, one-time research effort and as the first survey in a possible series of annual surveys that could be used to develop trend data for the state. The survey will include three blocks of questions:



DRISI provides solutions and  
knowledge that improves  
California's transportation system

- a. **Core questions:** These questions, to be determined in consultation with Caltrans staff and other state experts, will ask respondents about topics such as their priorities for transportation improvements, their evaluation of transportation system quality, and knowledge about how the state funds transportation. Should the survey be repeated in future years, this block of questions will remain the same throughout each annual survey wave.
- b. **Variable questions:** In an annual survey series, this block of questions will change from year to year. The research team will work with staff at Caltrans and other state experts to identify question topics that will provide insight related to current policy priorities.
- c. **Respondent characteristics:** These questions will gather standard socio-demographic data, simple travel behaviors, and home zip-code and city.

The researchers will begin the project by developing the survey questions, then administer the survey, and finally analyze the data and write a final report.

## WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The goal is to compile a detailed project report that analyzes the survey findings about how the California public views transportation issues in the state.

## WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The survey results will inform Caltrans and other entities in the State of California about how state transportation policies and programs can be tailored to meet public priorities. Although the survey will be designed to support state programs, the findings will also inform policymakers at the local and regional levels.

## WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

The project has not yet begun. When it starts, the first task will be to design the survey instrument.